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C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 000379

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (JHUNTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/22/2019
TAGS: PGOV PREL EFIS KCOR SL
SUBJECT: ATTORNEY-GENERAL HAD HAND IN FISHERIES CORRUPTION

REF: FREETOWN 344

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Amy LeMar for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Per reftel, Minister of Marine Resources Haja Afsatu Kabba nearly released the seized fishing vessel, the Yu Feng 102, in return for a small bribe from its Taiwanese owners. In an additional revelation of corruption, the Chief Justice passed to the CDA on September 16 that the Attorney-General, Abdul Serry Kamal, was also involved in eliciting bribes. In this case, he offered to arrange for the 11 Taiwanese crewman to be released on payment of USD 155,000 in fines, essentially 100,000 for the vessel and 5,000 per individual (Note: The law allows for a fine of USD 100,000 per crewman. End Note). The 15 Indonesian and Filipino sailors were not included in the deal, and in fact it appears that the Sierra Leoneans forgot they were still on the boat pierside while the case against the Taiwanese moved forward. Following the announcement of the deal in the media, the Chief Justice reported that the Vice President intervened to block the release; the next day the 11 Taiwanese were re-arrested on procedural grounds, and the remaining fisherman were also taken into custody. Fisheries Minister Kabba reported she planned on pushing for fines of USD 100,000 per crewman, with a total price of USD 2.6 million. Intelligence sources confirmed the story of corruption on September 17, noting that the vessel would have gone free if the situation had been left to the Sierra Leonean judiciary.

¶2. (C) Despite high-level knowledge of the AG's complicity, as evidenced by the comments made by the Chief Justice, there is no talk that he might be relieved of his position.

FEDZER